

# The British Empire and A League of Peace

Suggesting the Purpose and Form of an Alliance of  
the English-Speaking Peoples

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"I want the English-speaking race to control the seas of the world, and I want them to do it not because they are the English-speaking race or my race, but because they are the only two branches of any race in the world who love peace and who will fight for peace.

"If you think we are the only democracy in the world, you are again mistaken. The Government of England is more democratic than is our own. The voice of the people of Great Britain is put upon the statute books within a few weeks after a general election, and the voice of ours may never be, and frequently has not been."

JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS,  
*Senator from Mississippi.*

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# THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND A LEAGUE OF PEACE

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## I

There are at present before the world only two possibilities for a league of peace. One is the League to Enforce Peace of which Mr. Taft is President—not necessarily that particular plan, but it may be taken as typical of all plans based upon treaties or definite agreements defining the objects and methods of the league and marking out the scope of its action. The other, created not by a series of defining clauses but by common ideals and purposes, with only the simplest machinery, is an alliance of all the English-speaking nations and of such other like-minded nations as might be willing to join them. It is not the purpose of this paper to advocate one of these plans as opposed to the other. There is no real opposition between them. A common understanding among the English-speaking nations could exist together with a more formal league and very possibly will, if such a league is formed. Here may be pointed out merely one advantage of the less formal plan. There can be no doubt but that a league based upon common ideas of policy and common standards of international right and wrong will possess far higher flexibility and freedom of judgment and action. Definitive treaties however free must restrict by the very fact that they create and define. I wish rather here to show that an alliance of ideals and common standards is now almost in existence and that very little needs still to be done to give it effective form.

All the English-speaking nations except one belong now and have always belonged to a single political organization, the British Empire. The United States is not a member of this organization. But its area and population, its developed resources and capitalized wealth, make it necessary to the league. On its side it

is just beginning to awaken to the close similarity in ideals and standards of international conduct which exists between it and the other members of the group. The general recognition of this similarity, which cannot long be delayed, is the essential and necessary foundation of a common policy. Such an alliance must be largely tacit and informal, made very likely by a common understanding rather than by a treaty. It must grow out of natural conditions and not be artificially made. Therefore there must be among all its members a very widespread agreement upon the ultimate controlling motives of action and a common conviction as to the objects to be sought, and these agreements and convictions must be so well known by all that they are securely trusted. If this knowledge and confidence cannot be obtained, we must fall back upon a league artificially made by treaty as the best we can do, for without them no bond of action which has its roots in living forces is possible.

A discussion of the means of reaching this understanding will also be omitted. This may be done in confidence that the course of events will bring it about, and has already largely done so, without the necessity of argument. During the war millions of our young men and women have been brought into close contact with our Allies, especially with those who speak English. We have stood with them in places which try the metal of which men are made and under conditions which strip off all disguise and reveal unmistakably character and motive. We have learned to know one another in a few months as would not be possible in a generation of the slow times of peace. Now that the war has ended with victory the conferences that will be necessary to formulate a just settlement will reveal the international standards and purposes of nations, the national mind and will, beyond the possibility of mistake. And nobody among us who reads and thinks at all is going to escape the conclusions which will be formed. Whoever has studied the growth of opinion in the English-speaking world during the last twenty-five years may leave this difficulty of bringing about the necessary understanding of one another to the work of time with perfect confidence as to the final result.

Another difficulty—to find the proper form of organization—is far more serious. I have said that all the English-speaking nations except the United States are now members of a common political organization, but it is not an organization of the right kind. It is still in political form an Empire. That is, in the field we are concerned with, the field of international relations, one of the

nations makes decisions and determines policy, and the others have no recognized way of influencing the determination which they assist in carrying out. So long as this fact continues, one of these nations rules in this field to the exclusion of the others, and so long the organization is imperial, even if the sovereign is a parliament and not a man. There is beginning a fashion of speaking of the British Commonwealth of Nations instead of the British Empire, but the new name denotes in international relations an aspiration for the future rather than something at present really true. So long as each nation is not allowed its proportionate share in making decisions, nothing exists which can be truly called a Commonwealth of Nations, nothing which is in any proper sense a federation.

Plainly in this field a reorganization is demanded, but the problem of forming a workable union in foreign affairs for the British Commonwealth of Nations is in all essentials the problem of forming a workable league of peace for all English-speaking nations. If there is ever discovered a workable form for one of these groups, it will be a workable form for the other, for the problem is fundamentally the same in each case. So far as this problem concerns the British Empire men have worked upon it consciously, with many differing proposals and much discussion, for half a century. Indeed it is a hundred and fifty years since the first suggestion for its solution was made, though with somewhat less consciousness of the exact problem to be solved. But the plans proposed have been exclusively along a single line. The task at which men have labored has been to find some means for the representation of the outlying Dominions in a central parliament of the Empire, either in the existing parliament of the British Isles or in an imperial parliament. Even the latest proposal of an imperial organization, the most carefully elaborated that has ever been presented and based upon a very wide collection of opinions, insists upon the necessity of an imperial parliament.

It is not strange that a central parliament should seem to British students of the problem indispensable. The essential feature of the British system, the control of the executive by the legislature through a cabinet of responsible ministers, is so successful in practice and so thoroughly democratic allowing the quickest action of public opinion upon the central government of any political machinery yet devised, that it may well seem that no British government can exist without it. And yet there can be no doubt but that such a conclusion overlooks three important facts. First, that the alli-



ance to be formed is a commonwealth of nations, not a commonwealth of provinces; second, that within a commonwealth of nations internal legislation, making laws which are binding upon all the members alike, is not merely out of place but dangerous; third, the proposal overlooks the experience of the United States.

1. To call the alliance to be formed even within the British Empire a commonwealth of nations is not a misnomer. The five Dominions usually counted, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland, are practically now independent nations so far as the legislation of any imperial parliament is concerned. This is true notwithstanding the continued survival of the signs and forms of an earlier legislative dependence which was once more real. Enabling acts are still sometimes necessary; colonial acts may still be disallowed; the British Parliament may still legislate in regard to some matters of intercolonial trade; appeals still lie under certain conditions from colonial decisions to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London. But it is a commonplace of knowledge throughout the Empire that all the survivals of that earlier dependence which still exist are formal and technical rather than real. So true is this that a student of imperial affairs has declared that the Dominions have been granted every item of self-government upon which they have insisted including the regulation of immigration and of commercial relations, and that if anything has not yet been granted them it is because they have not insisted upon it. It is common knowledge that an attempt by the British Parliament to impose legislation upon these Dominions without their consent is an impossibility, and that if legislation upon an imperial, intercolonial question should again be necessary, it will be adopted with as full consideration of colonial opinion as if adopted by the colonies themselves. As a matter of fact all signs of the past generation indicate that such agreements upon intercolonial questions as may be necessary in the future will be reached by the methods in use among independent nations, negotiation and conference, rather than by legislation from above. The first step towards a British federation is a clear recognition of this fact with all that it logically involves, and the necessary first step towards forming an alliance of the English-speaking nations for peace is also a full recognition of the fact that it is to be formed, not between two independent nations, England and the United States, to which are attached certain dependencies, but between seven nations who stand on the same footing in rela-

tion to their international interests and who are to be equal partners in due proportion in all that is done.

It must be carefully observed that the independence of a sovereign state is not proposed for the members of the British Empire. It is not necessary that they should have the power to make treaties opposed to the rest of the Empire or to make separate war and peace. All that is implied is independence within the commonwealth, which means no more for each than a position of exact equality in such questions with every other member of the commonwealth. Two things appear indispensable to such an independence: one is an equal share, an effective voice and proportional determining influence in all decisions which settle the policy of the commonwealth; the other is security that when treaties and other relations with foreign states concern one member exclusively that member shall have the final voice, not of course in disregard of the other members but as the judge of last resort. So much independence as this last has already been practically conceded in some cases, as between Canada and the United States for example, but it should be made universal and constitutional. This is the kind of independence which already exists in regard to internal questions, and no revolutionary change is demanded to put the Empire as it now exists upon this basis in foreign affairs.

2. If it be admitted that the members of an alliance, whether a British Imperial Union or an English-speaking alliance for peace, are independent nations, it follows that internal legislation is not a natural consequence. It could undoubtedly be made possible by the terms of the union, but it would have to be artificially provided for by special enactment. The natural method of settling internal questions would still be negotiation and conference, rendered no doubt especially easy by the existence of the alliance, but not changed in character. A heavy burden of proof rests on those who would create an imperial parliament for real legislation where none now exists. And that is not the way of safety. The greatest danger in any federal union is the temptation to impose legislation upon a local unit for which it is not ready, or to which it is strongly opposed. Within the British Empire the temptation is already at hand in the widely divergent views among the different units on the subject of intercolonial migration, and the danger of uniform legislation on the matter is unmistakable. The best result, the least dangerous to the union as a whole, which could follow such legislation, where feeling is strongly engaged, would be that which has followed the violation of the principle of federal government in the Fifteenth

Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, local nullification. Experience shows that even such subjects as internal commerce, involving the vexed question of protective tariffs, and naturalization are best left to local legislation. Why then create the risk? The natural and safe method is local independence and negotiation under the influence of common imperial public opinion, and the general principle which should be clearly recognized is that the primary and most essential object of a British federation or of an English-speaking alliance is not internal regulation but external unity.

3. The belief that an imperial parliament is necessary overlooks the experience of the United States. Avowedly one of the chief reasons, if not the chief, for considering an imperial parliament necessary is to secure the responsibility of the executive in the British way. Responsibility secured in some way is a necessity. No constitution, no alliance or federation, no common understanding even, which disregards the matter can hope to obtain the sanction of democratic nations. But it does not follow that the British method of the responsible ministry is the only method of enforcing executive responsibility, or that any mechanical method need be provided.

The British method of cabinet responsibility goes back to a time when the legislative assembly was still the best means of gathering and focusing public opinion. It is founded wholly on the theory that through the representatives elected by the people the will of the nation can best be declared and brought to bear upon the executive. In the eighteenth century when the responsible ministry was invented, this was still the case. It is probable also that the American Congress has departed farther from this ideal of representative government than any other legislative assembly, but it merely stands in an advanced position on the road which all are following. In this fact consists a part of the value of American experience as a guide. It would be I think difficult to find a student of public affairs in this country who believes that the public opinion of the United States is best ascertained through Congress, or that in the matter of general policy it is in ordinary cases brought to bear upon the executive by means of Congress. Such a student would be more likely to maintain that the opposite of this is true, and that in many cases during the last twenty years the executive has brought the majority opinion of the country to bear upon Congress. In reality while the President undoubtedly makes use of the knowledge of individual members of congress, he has other and better means of finding out



the judgment of the nation, means unknown to the eighteenth century and increased almost miraculously in the nineteenth. On the morning after President Wilson's speech of February 3, 1917, on submarine warfare, the *New York Times* laid before its readers an impressive collection of opinion upon it from all parts of the country, of fifty-nine newspapers, including seventeen German-language papers, of sixteen governors of states and of two state legislatures, and of many men of prominence, including a number of leading German-Americans.

In England itself in extremely important matters the public opinion of the nation has been ascertained and faithfully acted upon with no formal parliamentary action. This has even been done in the making and unmaking of cabinets. Twice since the war began the cabinet has been reconstructed, once involving the fall of the Prime Minister, with no preliminary declaration or mandate of parliament whatever. But, notwithstanding the comment of certain extreme radicals, it would be absurd to maintain that the present ministry of Mr. Lloyd George did not take office because of a public demand, or that it could maintain itself for a moment if it lost public confidence, whether parliament registered the change or not. As a distinguished English publicist said at the time: "In the present instance the House has not been defied, but it has not been consulted. Mr. Lloyd George draws his strength from outside the walls of parliament; he owes his elevation to a kind of informal and irregular, but unmistakably emphatic plebiscite. The House of Commons did not make him premier; it is doubtful whether it could unmake him." The truth is that parliament is no longer a channel through which the nation communicates with the government or declares what the government could not otherwise know, nor an organ for the formation of a national judgment. Parliament has no longer any peculiar access to the springs of opinion, but itself finds out what the national judgment is just as the executive does, or the editor of a great newspaper, or his subscriber in a remote hamlet. Here again it must be observed that this is not an assertion of the influence of the press in forming public opinion under a democratic government. That is a much larger and more difficult question, and an entirely different one. Here attention is merely called to the modern function of the press as a collector of news and opinion; not as leading opinion or expressing its own opinion, but as showing what the public thinks and decides.

When this has been said however the entire subject of executive responsibility has not been considered. It is still necessary that the

public should be confident that the executive will not carry out a policy opposed to its will. Here again the experience of the United States is enlightening, for it shows how a living democracy operates in just this matter as supplementing and modifying the written law. The President is supposed to appoint his cabinet to suit himself with no formal responsibility for his selections, and no doubt presidents have shown considerable idiosyncrasy in their appointments and considerable power of resistance to popular demand for changes in their cabinets. There have been so many cases, however, within comparatively recent memory, from Alger to Bryan, of members of the cabinet actually forced out of office by the pressure of public opinion, whatever may have been the pretext upon which they resigned, that it is not going too far to say that the drift has been decided during the last generation towards reducing to a form the undoubted legal independence of the President in this matter. As to the President himself we have only to imagine an extreme case in which the will of the nation should unmistakably declare itself against a policy desired by him to be convinced that he would be obliged to abandon it. By this is not meant the will of the political party opposed to the President's own, however loudly expressed, for this, so long as it is this only, he has the right to disregard, nor is it meant that the President is cut off from an attempt to educate the nation up to a policy which at the moment he is not trying to press, but it does mean that we have practically reached a point in our constitutional development where the President would never insist upon carrying through a policy against which the convinced will of the nation clearly declared. And every American will understand at once that the President would know what that will is and act upon it without the necessity of any congressional action.

And it is this, the convinced will of the nation, that we must regard as the final authority in any international alliance, whatever form that alliance may take. This is something behind which no form of international government can go. This is as true of an alliance with an elaborate and written constitution, which attempts to vest in a central body a power of coercion, as of a mere understanding between nations which rests upon common ideals of conduct and policy and is managed by conference. The living forces of growth in a democratic world will make over any written constitution to suit themselves, even of a world league, as the constitution of the United States has been made over in so many ways without formal amendment.

And what could be the practical operation of any plan with minutely worked out constitution? What could be the force by which it would do its work and which would enable it to maintain any power with which it might be invested? Before we can make any secure advance to a solution of the problem of a workable international union, it must be recognized that the binding force of any alliance cannot be the right of coercion bestowed by legislation or by treaty upon a central body, but the common moral force, the moral unity of ideal and purpose, which must underlie any form which ingenuity can devise. A nation, a member of an imperial or a world alliance, cannot be coerced except by the force of opinion. Coercion by physical force would be the beginning of suicide. The nation which will not agree to the common judgment of other nations, which will not join in common action, by its refusal declares its independence and throws itself out of the world alliance. In other words it declares that it does not share in the common ideals and standards of conduct on which alone such an alliance can be securely based and therefore that it is not rightfully a member of it. A league which must maintain itself by a constant show of force is not worth having as a league of peace. It may be worth having for other reasons, but it would make no improvement upon an offensive and defensive alliance formed by a group of nations to prevent other nations from carrying out hostile intentions. That is indeed all that it would be, a new Holy Alliance, though it might be hoped with more fidelity to its high ambitions than Alexander I.'s. If a league is to rise above this level, it must do so because it is based upon and sustained by something higher than a code of laws. It is because present experience gives rise to the hope that such higher ideals and standards are shared by many nations that we may believe that a real alliance for future peace is possible. If they are not so shared, then again we must fall back upon the artificial methods of treaties and law codes as the best that we can do until they do arise. In that case, if an international league should create an executive in official and permanent form, but without parliamentary responsibility, some corresponding official form of removal might be necessary. For this purpose probably an adaptation of the recall would be the most practicable, as in Art. V. of the Articles of Confederation of the United States adopted in 1778.

But it is to be hoped that the dangers of this method may be avoided. The inveterate slowness of the mind to get out of the ruts which time has made is shown in the fact that nine tenths of the discussion of an international alliance for peace is full of elabo-

rate schemes of treaties and constitutions, of vested powers in parliaments and courts and cabinets. These are all survivals of a time out of which the war has swiftly brought us. They fail to recognize the fact that all things have been made new, and that we are now gathering in a day the harvest of a century since the democratic movement began. How plain is the fact, if we will but see it, that the great international alliance which now exists, which is managing the common affairs of nations on a scale never before thought possible, exists by virtue of no creative treaties or elaborate agreements, and that it is making the machinery of its operation as it goes on with its task.

Of such enormous possible influence upon the organization of international affairs is this fact that the future historian is likely to regard it as one of the greatest advances gained from the war. It needs indeed very little change in the machinery now in use for the management of the common policy of the widest combination of nations ever brought together to adapt it to their common policies of peace. For though it is the stress of war no doubt which has created the new machinery, it is clear that it may be adapted to other ends. And if the machinery is new, it must not be overlooked that it is also a new age and a new world upon which all nations will enter with the close of the war. What we are called upon now to see is how naturally and completely the new machinery we are evolving meets the demands of the new world after the war. The problem of a union in a common international policy is already almost solved. To all intents and purposes such a union exists to-day with the necessary machinery. Only the slightest adjustment is necessary, mainly in the way of reaching an understanding, not in inventing forms. The largest reshaping of existing conditions, whatever be the outcome, seems to be demanded of the British Empire.

The new machinery marks the way of the future and it also solves the problem of responsibility. It indicates clearly that the scheme for a cabinet of five members, with definitely assigned portfolios of foreign affairs, finances, army, navy, and colonies, which the most recent and carefully made proposal for the federation of the British Empire calls for, is not necessary, even for effective responsibility. Such a plan goes with the idea of internal government in elaborate detail. It is based upon the theory that such internal government must be provided for. If it be true that the main purpose of federation is unity of external policy, not internal regulation, it follows that such a cabinet is as unnecessary and out of place as an imperial parliament. The astonishing development of the council method for



the management of all sorts of interests, and of international conference on a scale never before attempted, the gradual evolution of the war council of all the allies with universal public approval and a disposition to put under its control affairs of world-wide import, show what should take the place of a cabinet, and events have proved that the responsibility of the council is real and immediate. It is exactly the responsibility of the American executive. Mr. Lloyd George certainly learned, as a consequence of his famous Paris speech, that membership in a council conference was not free from responsibility of a very effective kind, and it will not be forgotten that earlier still the conference proposal of an international trade boycott of Germany after the war disappeared from view because of general disapproval.

If the British Empire, as it exists at present, could advance to a practical, not a merely sentimental, recognition of the fact that it is a commonwealth of nations and could bring itself to act in international relations in view of the fact, the problem of federation, of such federation as is necessary, would be almost instantly solved. It would be seen at once that the proper method of operation is not legislation but conference and that an elaborate machinery of parliament and cabinet need not be provided, but that the far simpler allied council would serve every purpose. The transformation of the British Empire actually into a commonwealth of nations would also render at once the problem of America's joining with it in a common international policy far easier of solution. To join in some arrangement however simple for a common policy with the British Empire as that has been historically known to us will seem to many a doubtful and difficult thing to do. To join with six English-speaking nations, standing upon a common footing of interest and influence, which are all alike peers of ours, would be a different matter.

## II

If the conclusions which have been reached in the first part of this paper are sound, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the practical steps within the British Empire which are there urged. If we consider the fact that the apparent balance of probabilities in the opinion of the world to-day in the matter of a league of peace inclines against the practicability of the plan, it is hardly too much to say that the speedy formation of such a league, successful in operation and commanding the adhesion of non-English-speaking nations, depends upon the demonstration of two things,



which can at present be made by the English-speaking nations alone: that narrow traditional feelings, growing out of local nationalism, can be cordially laid aside in favor of international union, and that adequate machinery already exists to secure the successful operation of a league of nations. It is a prime necessity of the situation that a demonstration of these facts should be made, not in words, in argument and exhortation, but in the hard logic of the actual existence and operation of a league of nations.

It is not strange that the world is skeptical. The transformation which would be wrought in human affairs by an effective league for permanent peace would be greater than any that has taken place since the beginning of history. There would seem to be required almost a re-making of human nature. War, conquest, selfish expansion of national interests at the expense of neighbors, dreams of empire and world dominion, these have been the exclusive rule, and books of history have found almost nothing else to record than an account of these strifes. No evidence has yet been presented by any nation, at least outside of words, or by any body of men of controlling influence, that a decisive change has taken place in these elemental feelings and ambitions. To propose to transform all this at once seems absurd, and especially so, immediately after the worst exhibition of these savage passions since the world considered itself civilized. We must acknowledge that most Continental statesmen do not believe in the possibility. We should expect the earliest and fullest agreement with us from the French, but leaders of France have frankly said they are not interested in the plan. If it be true that many statesmen of the Continent have now expressed themselves as in agreement with the ideal of a league of peace, it must nevertheless be recognized that their conversion is recent, and that upon the practical side, if any attempt is made to formulate details in the constitution of the league, there are numerous grounds for grave doubts as to the harmony which is necessary to any satisfactory result. Still more significant is the fact that among us, and even among the avowed supporters of a league of peace, the belief is freely expressed that future war cannot be prevented, that the utmost that can be hoped for is to make it difficult and more than ever dangerous. This opinion is not merely significant of what is believed possible, but it also betrays a frame of mind which would make it easy to give up the whole undertaking in the face of practical difficulties which may look serious. If we are to get what we really need, if we are not to be satisfied with an artificial and mechanical league, drawing its only life from treaties and maintained only by armies, if we

are to attain to a league which is the expression of common moral ideals and to a sure conviction of success, what is imperatively demanded is an object lesson, an actual instance of such a league on a large scale, among nations, with practical machinery that does its work. The Anglo-Saxon nations at the present moment almost furnish the required example. All that is lacking is that the Anglo-Saxon union should be put into definite, visible form, so that the most skeptical cannot doubt its existence. The comparatively slight changes which have been urged in the first part of this paper would bring about this result, and I repeat that the necessary beginning obviously rests with the British Empire.

In the meantime so great practical preparation for the extinction of war has been made as would not five years ago have been believed possible. The experience of war has done that. The whole civilized world is convinced, intellectually at least, that war is a thing that ought not to occur again; that in our stage of civilization it is out of place, out of date; that it belongs to a lower stage which we have left behind us. To this conviction the Germans have, perhaps providentially, greatly contributed by their reversion to barbarism as a logical outcome of the war spirit. There could have been no more convincing demonstration of where war belongs in the stages of human progress than they have made. We know that it does not belong where we belong. Even professional soldiers, whose whole life work and study is war and the preparation for war, share this conviction, if they have been brought into personal contact with war as German science conducts it. I am not saying that they are convinced that no more wars will occur, but that war ought to be as obsolete in our civilization as totems and matriarchy. This conviction in the minds of a good many men is undoubtedly latent. It is not very consciously held at the moment. But it is held, and it can easily be called out, and it will prove a tremendous accession of force to any plan of permanent peace that promises to be workable.

A plan of permanent peace that promises to be workable is what this present crisis in human progress imperatively demands and demands at once. I do not say that if this opportunity is lost no other will ever be given. That would be absurd. It is inconceivable that civilization should go on much longer without devising some permanent security against war. What I wish to insist strongly upon is that we do now have the opportunity, and that it is the height of folly to run all the risks involved in delay for another generation or two. The disposition of the world at the close of the war whether it is wholly conscious of it or not, ought to be seized

upon to make this great advance certain. But who is going to do it; how is it going to be done? It is certain that no Continental nation will take the lead. There is no movement of significance in any one of them towards this step; no leader of influence has declared an intention of the kind. The whole responsibility, in this crisis in the face of this opportunity, rests upon the English-speaking nations. If they allow the chance to pass by, the possibility is lost for the world for how long no one can say.

In spite of the clearness with which this situation appears to be revealed, I think we are forced to confess that the mass of the people of the English-speaking nations do not realize the responsibility put upon them by the present opportunity to prevent the recurrence of war, when combined with the backwardness of other nations to act. Men in high position in both the chief Anglo-Saxon nations have declared themselves in favor of a league of peace, but there is not the slightest evidence which has become public that any actual steps have been taken towards that end or any practicable plan formed. The only plans that have been proposed are the work of private societies or individuals, and they are all of the type of treaties and constitutions and law codes, a type of international organization which ought to be regarded as obsolete, or at most as only a last resort. These plans would all depend for any success they might have upon the existence of common moral standards and ideals of conduct among the nations. If such standards do not exist, constitutions and codes could only be enforced by war, and if they do exist, a law code is unnecessary and a hindrance. Our responsibility is not to be met in that way and, if we have nothing better to offer, the opportunity is not likely to result in important permanent gain.

Whether, however, we realize the fact or not, whether we are willing to act upon it or not, we have, I venture to assert, the situation in our hands. Clear evidence, open, frank, and unmistakable, presented to all the world, that the seven Anglo-Saxon nations and their dependencies have banded themselves together in a league of peace, a commonwealth of nations, to have no more war among themselves, to lay aside forever all ambition of imperial domination, to pursue in their relations with all other nations a common policy of justice and fairness, and to throw the combined weight of their resources upon the side of justice and fairness wherever in the world wrong is threatened—plain proof that such a commonwealth does really exist would rally to its support all the latent conviction and passionate desire in every other nation. I am not asserting that

this way of getting at a world league of peace might not leave remaining for some time the possibility of war, or of a threat of war, as the only means to peace. There would be very little probability of actual war, but a possibility must be admitted. I do affirm with the deepest conviction that this is the easiest and shortest road now open to the world to the extinction of war. And I do affirm again that the Anglo-Saxon nations are now so nearly in a position to offer this clear proof that only the slightest changes are needed to make their union an actual and evident fact.

Let us see how the probabilities shape themselves considered from the standpoint of practical facts. In the first place it is a necessary preliminary that the world should be convinced of the sincerity of our professions. We may to a considerable extent take it for granted that this will be the case, though we should not overlook the fact that there will be difficulties here. To be honest we must confess that the past history of both the great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race justifies some suspicion. It is especially true that we have given other nations ample grounds on which to suspect our policy in just that particular which has brought about so great an alliance against the Germans—imperial expansion. It is not possible for us to change our past record, but never before was there offered to any people so great an opportunity to prove beyond the possibility of doubt that it had forsaken its past as will be offered to the Anglo-Saxon race at the close of this war. The imperial spoils that might be ours for the taking are so enormous, the consent of the world would be so easily given, that renunciation can be attributed to one motive only, and no more impressive proof could be furnished. I am assuming that we shall make that renunciation and that is surely the belief of us all. We are too deeply pledged by the words of our leaders which we have unanimously applauded to do otherwise.

It is going to be somewhat more difficult for us to remove all suspicion of our policy in the matter of economic freedom, and equality, and our official utterances on this point have not been so clear and unanimous. Prediction about it may be somewhat rash, but we may feel sure that, if the event proves that the sacrifice of economic monopoly or the leveling of economic barriers is necessary within a commonwealth of nations framed for peace, we shall succeed in persuading ourselves to consent. Easiest of all will it be for us to be true to our professions in regard to the spread of democratic institutions. It will be so perfectly clear even to the citizens of recent autocracies that peace can be secure only in a democratic



world that there is not likely to be any temptation for us to forget what we have said. Nor is our past in this respect open to much question. The spread of democratic government anywhere in the world has always had our sympathy and support. It is certain that if we are going to lead we must make our intentions in these three particulars clear beyond all question and, though it may be presumptuous to affirm it, we have some right to trust ourselves to do so. If we can, the rest of mankind will not hesitate to follow.

If the world is convinced of the honesty of our intentions, it must next be convinced that the plan which we propose is workable. Such a conviction is absolutely essential to the adoption of the plan. The most serious obstacle in the way of a league of peace to-day and in the future is the belief on the part of practical statesmen that it will not work in practice. No proposed league that does not furnish good evidence of its practicality is going to be adopted by any number of nations except under some form of compulsion. One that does furnish such evidence is sure, so far as human foresight can predict, to rally to itself the support of the civilized world and turn the current of history towards permanent peace. This is exactly what the Anglo-Saxon race has to offer, a practical, working plan, successfully operating in a real commonwealth of nations, and this is why the comparatively slight changes which have been suggested above are so enormously important just now, to furnish the proof in the clearest and most convincing form of an existing, smoothly acting league of nations with all the necessary machinery in full operation.

Let us suppose that the Anglo-Saxon union has clearly made the required proof and invites the association of other nations, what practical result can be expected to follow? First without question the immediate adhesion of France and Italy. It may be that the statesmen and politicians of neither country are ready to lead or at present even interested. It may be that some of them still entertain hopes of expansion or revenge which could not be realized in such a plan. But if there were held up before the people of those countries a living example of a league of peace, simple in character and promising of results, beyond a doubt there is a latent public opinion and conviction in both nations which would sweep them into line with us at once. About Japan there may be more doubt but, if we may trust to public professions and have confidence in the reality of her apparent progress, as we probably should, she would not be far behind. It is highly probable that before the matter had gone so far as this, the minor European nations, which have not taken part



in the war, and some at least of the Latin-American nations, would declare themselves ready to join in the plan. There remains the problem of Russia and the Central Powers. About Russia no one can make a confident prediction, but there are two possibilities which seem to cover the present question. If a genuinely democratic government can be formed in Russia, which establishes internal order, its adhesion will be certain. No democratic government, in the condition in which the Russian would be left, could do otherwise than welcome the support and assistance which would come from a league of peace. If there is no prospect of stable government and domestic order, Russia must be in some form a subject of the League's protection and tutelage. Exactly the same two possibilities exist in the case of the Central Powers. The hope of the future lies in the rise of stable democracies in these lands and, if they do arise, there is no serious problem or room for doubt as to where they will stand. If they do not arise, there will be problems and serious ones, but problems whose very existence will be unanswerable argument for a league of peace. This is the catalogue to all intents and purposes of the whole world. If the demonstration of the working practicability of a commonwealth of nations can be made for the world by the Anglo-Saxon nations, the world, the mass of mankind, the deciding force of democracies, is eager to be convinced and will respond.

What this paper advocates is clearly that the Anglo-Saxon nation should go on to adopt this method of shaping their international policy, among themselves and so far as their power extends, whether other nations will or not. Unmistakable evidence that this was going to be done would have enormous influence upon all the diplomacy of the end of the war period. But it would have more influence than that, for it is by no means an unimportant consideration that the many objections which have been made against the formation of a league of peace in advance of the consent of other nations, particularly of the enemy countries, have no force against a league of the kind here described. A league which does not propose an elaborate scheme for binding the future action of nations, which does not draw up a list of things which nations may or may not do, nor of penalties and rules for their enforcement, deprives outside nations of no essential privilege by its formation in advance of their consent. No nation which is invited to join a league having no more complicated constitution than an engagement to settle future questions as they arise by a method of conference and councils can feel that it has been unjustly deprived of a vote which it would like

to have used against some feature of the plan. It is the attempt to settle questions before they arise, to determine what action shall be taken in every set of circumstances, that makes it seem unfair and impolitic not to give every nation a voice in shaping the plan.

Contrast the ease with which such a league of peace as has been here advocated would come into existence, requiring only the simple machinery of councils and conference under a general agreement which is also based on common moral convictions and has been already abundantly tested by actual use during the stress of the greatest war that ever has been or is likely ever to be—contrast the ease of such a creation with the endless debates over clauses and stipulations and exemptions which the formation of a league by treaty would inevitably call forth. If the British Parliament in a formal Act will declare the present Imperial War Cabinet permanent for all imperial questions of domestic or foreign policy, and will do it in such a way as to make it clear that an equal proportionate voice and vote is secured to the representatives of the Dominions with those of the British Isles, the necessary first step and the longest step towards the greater result will have been taken. It may be that there is some better form for such a constructive declaration to take than an Act of Parliament. The form is a matter of indifference. What is essential is that in some form it should be made clear to the world that in the organization of the British Empire this method of deciding questions of policy has been made permanently constitutional. In the exigency of the present time the world should not be left to find that fact out by inference from accumulating cases. There is no time for the slow process of induction. The foundation of the world league of peace cannot be laid too quickly nor made too plain to the sight of every man. It is as an object lesson that its work must be done, and as an object lesson it must be able to convince the world of its existence, of its purpose, and of the method of its action. Given this, with the instant and universal remembrance of the Allied War Council and its constitution and what it has done in directing the common policy of four great nations and many smaller ones, the conclusion as to the form and machinery of a world league of peace is too immediate to be avoided, and the method of formation will be seen to be so easy that its adoption will be almost spontaneous.

I am of course assuming that on the formation of an Imperial Cabinet of the kind described to determine the foreign policy of the British Empire, the United States would be willing to make known its readiness to enter with other nations into an application of the

same method to the decision of all world questions. I am perhaps assuming too much, but I think not. Any careful student of the drift of public opinion during the past twenty years in the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race must be convinced that our ideas regarding foreign policy and international duties and relations are already practically the same. It is perhaps still necessary that this fundamental fact should become generally known to the mass of our people. Undoubtedly there is more need of this revelation in the United States than in the British Empire, and undoubtedly it is also on the way. This is one reason why the reorganization of the British Empire would have so decisive an influence at the present time through its effect upon American opinion. With a general conviction of our common intentions and purposes, it is not pure idealism to believe that Americans will be ready not merely for a world league of peace of the kind described but also, as a preliminary step, for a method of common councils and conference with the Imperial Cabinet to fix upon a common Anglo-Saxon foreign policy. If that fact is made evident to the world, and the association of other nations is invited, the results described above will certainly follow.

In spite of the effort in the first part of this paper to make clear the democratic character of an Imperial Cabinet system and the certainty of its control by public opinion, I fear the constant recurrence of objection from devotion to the traditional British constitution and a feeling that a more obvious form of ministerial responsibility is necessary. I beg the objector to consider again the ways by which to-day public opinion brings itself to bear upon the government; to remember that every member of the Imperial Cabinet is at home a responsible minister, in the majority of cases a Prime Minister, and that he will be even more sharply held to answer for his imperial commitments than for his domestic measures; and finally to reflect carefully upon the fact that the function of an Imperial Cabinet is not legislation but the direction of policy, and that to this function in the history of the British constitution Parliamentary responsibility has only indirectly applied. Most conclusive of all with reference to an understanding of the democratic character of the league will be a study of the methods by which public opinion at present makes itself known and controls the conduct of those who legislate for it and carry out its policy. They foreshadow the methods of the final democracy and are sufficient for all its purposes.

